

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

HEARING #19-11769

APRIL 4, 2019

2:00 P.M.

ND-2019-3-E:

SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTRIC & GAS COMPANY — *Request by Commissioner Howard for an Allowable Ex Parte Communication Briefing Regarding Tree Trimming and Potential Alternatives*

ALLOWABLE EX PARTE BRIEFING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Comer H. 'Randy' RANDALL, *Chairman*; and COMMISSIONERS John E. 'Butch' HOWARD, Florence P. BELSER, and G. O'Neal HAMILTON

ADVISOR TO COMMISSION: Joseph Melchers, Esq.

GENERAL COUNSEL

STAFF: Jerisha Dukes, Esq., Commissioners' Staff; Douglas Pratt and Norman Scarborough, Technical Advisory Staff; Jackie Thomas, Information Technology Staff; Patricia Stephens, Project Management Staff; Afton Ellison, Clerk's Staff; Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC, Court Reporter; and Hope Adams, Hearing Room Assistant

APPEARANCES:

K. CHAD BURGESS, ESQUIRE, representing SOUTH CAROLINA ELECTRIC & GAS COMPANY, together with **KELLER KISSAM** [*President, Electric Operations / Southeast Energy Group, Dominion Energy*] and **MARK BRANHAM** [*Supervisor, Vegetation Management, Maintenance, and Construction / SCE&G*], Presenters

NANETTE EDWARDS, ESQUIRE, Executive Director of THE SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF REGULATORY STAFF

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Note: For identification of any additional referenced materials and/or links for same, please see correspondence to be filed by the Office of Regulatory Staff Designee

Please note the following inclusions/attachments to the record:

- SCE&G's Presentation Slides (PDF) and the video file shown in conjunction with same.

P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Please be seated.

I want to welcome everyone to today's allowable ex parte briefing. I'm going to call first on our attorney, Mr. Joseph Melchers, to read the docket.

MR. MELCHERS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioners, we are here today, pursuant to a Notice of Request for Allowable Ex Parte Briefing, scheduled for today here in the Commission hearing room, April 4, 2019, at 2 p.m. And the request was by Commissioner Howard, who requested E&G conduct a briefing regarding tree trimming and potential alternatives. E&G is appearing in accordance with that request in Order 2019-235.

And, as stated, the topic is: Tree trimming and Potential Alternatives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, Mr. Melchers.

Ms. Edwards, from ORS.

MS. EDWARDS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon. My name is Nanette Edwards and I'm the Executive Director for the South

1 Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, and I'm here
2 today to certify the allowable ex parte briefing
3 that will be presented by South Carolina Electric &
4 Gas Company and conducted in accordance with the
5 provisions of South Carolina Code Annotated Section
6 58-3-260(C).

7 It is my duty to certify the record of this
8 proceeding to the Chief Clerk of the Public Service
9 Commission, Ms. Jocelyn Boyd. It is my duty to do
10 so within the next 72 hours and verify that this
11 briefing was, in fact, conducted in compliance with
12 the provisions of that Code Section 58-3-260(C).

13 The requirements of that statute are, in part,
14 that the allowable ex parte briefing be confined to
15 the subject matter that was noticed; in this case,
16 the subject matter is tree trimming and potential
17 alternatives. I therefore ask that the presenters,
18 the Commissioners, and Staff all please refrain
19 from discussing any matters not related to these
20 two topics – or to this topic.

21 Under the provisions of that Statute 58-3-
22 260(C), participants, Commissioners, and Commission
23 Staff are prohibited from requesting or giving any
24 commitment, predetermination, or prediction
25 regarding any action by any Commissioner as to any

1 ultimate or penultimate issue which either is
2 before or is likely to come before the Commission.
3 In short, the presenters may not ask the
4 Commissioners for anything and the Commissioners
5 and the Staff shall not give any opinion or pledge
6 to the presenters.

7 I ask that the presenters, Commissioners, and
8 Commission Staff refrain from referencing any
9 reports, articles, statutes, or documents of any
10 kind that are not included in today's presentation.
11 If it is done, a copy of any such document, which
12 is referenced during the briefing or as part of any
13 questions or answers today, must be provided to me
14 for inclusion in the record within that 72-hour
15 period.

16 Finally, everyone in attendance today must
17 read, sign, and return the form which you were
18 given at the door when you came in today. This
19 form must be signed by each attendee to certify
20 that the requirements contained in 58-3-260(C) of
21 the South Carolina Code have been complied with
22 during today's presentation.

23 Thank you for your time and attention. Thank
24 you, Mr. Chairman.

25 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, Ms. Edwards.

1 There he – Mr. Burgess. I was hunting. I saw
2 your name on the list, but I didn't see you.

3 **MR. BURGESS:** I know, I was hiding over there.

4 Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the
5 Commission. My name is Chad Burgess. I'm in-house
6 corporate counsel for Dominion Energy. And on
7 behalf of the company, it's a pleasure to appear
8 before you today. And thank you, Commissioner
9 Howard, for extending this invitation.

10 I brought two presenters with me. I'll go
11 ahead and ask these gentlemen to come on up and
12 take their seats. Keller Kissam, who is the
13 company's President of Electric Operations, and
14 Mark Branham, who is the company's Supervisor of
15 Vegetation Management, Maintenance, and
16 Construction.

17 They've brought with them a slide deck today
18 of about 24 slides. There is a video embedded in
19 there, with respect to some alternatives that are
20 available when it comes to tree trimming. So,
21 we're going to run through that slide deck with
22 you.

23 I do believe, Mr. Chairman, it might be better
24 to hold your questions until the end. It helps the
25 flow. But if you feel inclined to ask a question

1 during the presentation, certainly, please stop us
2 and we'll answer those questions.

3 So without further ado, I'll turn it over to
4 Mr. Kissam, unless, Mr. Chairman, you have
5 anything.

6 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

7 Mr. Kissam, Mr. Branham, welcome.

8 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Thank you, Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 [Reference: Presentation Slide 1]

11 Mr. Chairman and fellow Commissioners, I
12 appreciate the opportunity to be in front of you
13 today. Commissioner Howard, thank you for
14 requesting this ex parte briefing – allowable ex
15 parte briefing.

16 I want to talk a little bit about our
17 vegetation management. And we'll start at a high
18 level and we'll work our way down, all the way to a
19 small level, as far as what's going on in some of
20 the neighborhoods that we're concerned about at
21 this particular point. I've got a slide deck and
22 I'll go ahead and begin.

23 First of all, the Northeast blackout. And
24 y'all will remember the Northeast blackout that
25 occurred on August 14, 2003.

[Reference: Presentation Slide 2]

Fifty-five million people were in the dark, and they were in the dark, pretty much, for about a week.

As a result of this, Congress enacted legislation in which they ordered FERC – the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission – to develop mandatory reliability standards for utilities. In addition to that, they empowered NERC to be that electric reliability organization to develop those standards.

We get audited on a regular basis by NERC and SERC – who is the local, regional authority – of our records as it relates to all of our electric reliability compliance. A big part of that is tree trimming.

On the tree-trimming side, I can tell you, on some of our lines, we are subject – if you've got a transmission line in the middle of a cotton field and a vine grows up in that line and causes an outage, you're subject to a fine up to a million dollars a day for every day that you allow that vine to be there and get progressively worse to put that line out of service. Same thing applies to trees that are growing within your right-of-way –

1 not off your right-of-way, but on your right-of-way
2 – that may fall into that line. Up to a million
3 dollars a day.

4 You're probably getting reports and you can
5 see there are some utilities that have, in fact,
6 received fines. At SCE&G, we take this very
7 seriously. And I can tell you, since the
8 implementation of this – knock on wood – we have
9 not received any type of fine or censure or any
10 order to go out and do any O&M activities that we
11 aren't currently performing to protect our assets.
12 We take this very seriously; we understand
13 vegetation management is a key to reliability, and
14 we want to be in compliance with the law.

15 Fifty-five million customers out of power in
16 the Northeast. Look at that satellite picture
17 there. You can see the impact of it. And it all
18 happened when a transmission line, under load,
19 sagged down into, what, tree branches.

20 [Reference: Presentation Slide 3]

21 In addition to that, Hurricane Sandy. We had
22 a number of crews that went and worked Hurricane
23 Sandy in the Connecticut and the Northeast areas.
24 It was one of the first times they had a major
25 storm come into that area. There was significant

1 flooding. One of the big complaints you had during
2 that time is they said, "It seems like the line
3 crews are just simply sitting there and not doing
4 any work. They're sitting in the trucks, they're
5 talking, they're not engaged in the work." The big
6 reason for the linemen not being able to do any
7 work is because of the tree ordinance that were in
8 place at that time, and there were so many trees
9 with the powerlines caught in between them that the
10 linemen could not even get to those lines until
11 extensive vegetation removal occurred, so that they
12 could go in and do their job.

13 What I've referenced here is a Heritage
14 Foundation Homeland Security report that was an
15 after-action with Sandy. Everyone says "Well, why
16 don't we just put all the lines underground?"
17 Well, number one, it's inherently expensive. It
18 costs 20 times more to put them underground. In
19 addition to that, when there's an outage
20 underground and we have a lot of issues with it,
21 with directional boring units and call-before-you-
22 dig, and people don't, and they dig into those
23 lines, and it's just as much of a safety risk from
24 underground lines as others. But, in particular,
25 as it relates to underground in coastal areas, it's

1 the intrusion of saltwater from the storm surge
2 that renders those underground facilities
3 inoperable.

4 I saw it after Hurricane Katrina, when I went
5 to Mississippi, and those coastal areas down there
6 that were flooded – because in that, there was a
7 lot of flooding that went on; that was a big
8 problem, once the winds got through. It's
9 particularly problematic if it comes at a high
10 tide. We all see down in Charleston and Beaufort
11 what happens when you get a prevailing wind, a high
12 tide, and significant rain, and you get significant
13 flooding.

14 In addition to that, it's important to note
15 that after Hurricane Matthew that we had here, our
16 barrier islands, as well as Beaufort, that were
17 impacted by that significant storm, we actually had
18 to go in – we experienced the same storm surge, and
19 our underground facilities being rendered
20 inoperable. And when I say "inoperable," take them
21 out of service, because they're no good, once that
22 seawater gets in there around all that copper and
23 the windings. And as a result, we actually had to
24 run temporary overhead lines, in order to get the
25 customers back on, and then eventually go back and

1 convert those back to their original.

2 [Reference: Presentation Slide 4]

3 This is interesting. This is Coral Gables,
4 Hurricane Irma, and I think we had about 155,000
5 customers out after Hurricane Irma. And I think
6 it's important to note this is a typical city –
7 Coral Gables, Florida – and they want to impose
8 various ordinances and tree-trimming regulations,
9 and things of that nature. As soon as the storm
10 passed, they began complaining about how long it
11 was taking to get the power back on. And this is
12 an actual press release from Florida Power & Light
13 that I'll just read a couple of snippets of: "Our
14 focus is on restoring power to all our customers,
15 and we will not be moved by self-entitled
16 politicians who are looking for someone to blame
17 for the City's irresponsibly managed tree program.
18 The fact is the City of Coral Gables has for many
19 years resisted Florida Power & Light's well-
20 documented efforts to trim trees and harden our
21 electrical system. Unfortunately for our customers
22 in that area, they are now paying the price in
23 terms of extended outages due to hundreds of trees
24 that have fallen into our lines...

25 "More importantly, it threatens the safety of

1 the residents of Coral Gables and the lives of the
2 line workers who are trying to restore power...”

3 [Reference: Presentation Slide 5]

4 In addition to that, this is pulled recently
5 from an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.
6 I’m sure you are all familiar with the situation
7 going on with Pacific Gas & Electric, the largest
8 utility in the United States, just underwent
9 bankruptcy, and all of the fires that they’ve had
10 out there in those areas, the loss of property, and
11 unfortunately the loss of life. And this is just
12 an article that has a mention of “Judge proposes
13 tighter tree-trimming oversight for Pacific Gas &
14 Electric.”

15 [Reference: Presentation Slide 6]

16 So tree trimming does produce reliability.
17 I’ve been before this Commission before and we have
18 talked about reliability and we’ve talked about
19 SAIDE: System Average Interruption Duration Index.
20 That is what we use across the utility spectrum to
21 measure reliability.

22 This is the average number of minutes that a
23 customer is out, on the SCE&G/Dominion Energy
24 system. And you can see where we have stacked up,
25 from 2014 to 2018. This is something we do, submit

1 on a quarterly basis here to the Commission, as do
2 our other South Carolina utility peers, and you see
3 kind of how we stack up against them. That is an
4 average of the other two investor-owned utilities
5 in South Carolina.

6 Let me give you another look at system
7 reliability as it relates to SAIDI –

8 [Reference: Presentation Slide 7]

9 – because it's very important. Back in 2002,
10 you see that that average SAIDE was 176 minutes.
11 You'll see that we dropped it down to the 134 and
12 145. And around that 136 figure in 2003, that is
13 when we decided that we were going to develop a
14 specific specification for trimming trees across
15 our service territory, and we were going to stick
16 to it, because we knew that that consistency would
17 produce reliability. And you can't go and deal
18 with one neighborhood with one spec and another
19 neighborhood with another. You've got to be
20 consistent. Firm, fair, and consistent is what you
21 have to be.

22 In addition to that, I'd like to point out, in
23 2008, we worked extensively with the Office of
24 Regulatory Staff, as well as with the Public
25 Service Commission, and during that time we

1 actually received permission to go in and
2 proactively remove some dollars out of the storm
3 reserve and apply it to our tree-trimming
4 activities. And the way I look at that is very
5 personal: Y'all had enough faith in us that y'all
6 were going to allow us to remove that money from
7 the fund and apply it to our program? Well, our
8 program needed to produce results and you need to
9 get a – our customers needed to get a return on
10 that particular investment.

11 And I'll have to point out – and ORS and the
12 Commission can take great credit for that, in your
13 insight and vision, because in 2008 you can see
14 when that money flowed over to our tree-trimming
15 effort, the reliability improved dramatically, from
16 125 to 97. And take out those two years there at
17 '10 and '11, you can see that we have had a
18 sustained level of improved reliability to our
19 customers, something that is very important and
20 something we're very proud of.

21 Now, how do we achieve that system
22 reliability?

23 Number one, and most importantly: vegetation
24 management.

25 Number two, our SCADA system. Y'all have

1 heard me talk about our SCADA system before. It's
2 like the smart-grid technology; it allows us to
3 isolate faults and move load around our system,
4 usually from our distribution/dispatch area, our
5 system control. Sometimes these switches now, in
6 certain areas, they detect a fault current and they
7 move the system around themselves.

8 And then, finally, good old backs, arms, and
9 knees of our linemen rising up out of bed at night
10 to answer the call and come out in the communities
11 where they live, and get these customers' lights
12 back on.

13 [Reference: Presentation Slide 8]

14 Resiliency is another important part of the
15 vegetation management activities.

16 I wanted to show you, from a resiliency
17 standpoint, that means – you know, one of the
18 things that's good about getting a major storm,
19 probably the only thing, it shows us that we aren't
20 as powerful as we think we are. We can't stop it.
21 It's coming. And the best we can do, sometimes, is
22 pick up the pieces.

23 But it's not just after the storm that the
24 work goes into being resilient from a storm coming
25 in. It happens every day, on those bluebird days,

1 when we're in performing trimming in various
2 neighborhoods, various transmission rights-of-way
3 around your system.

4 What I wanted to show you again is the various
5 large, major storms that we've had since '14.
6 You'll be familiar with them.

7 Winter Storm Pax: 151_[sic] outages. The
8 restoration time on that was five days. That's
9 pretty good for an ice storm. I can't stand an ice
10 storm because it's like it never ends. You're
11 waiting on that thermometer to go up so that it –
12 so you get a break. Sometimes with an ice storm,
13 you put the customers back on, and you turn around
14 and the same customers are back off again within
15 the next couple of hours.

16 Hurricane Matthew was a large one: 290,000
17 customers; restoration was six days. That was
18 mainly through the barrier islands – Beaufort,
19 Charleston – coming on in, up, almost through
20 Columbia, as well. Keep in mind, with Hurricane
21 Matthew – Hurricane Hugo, I remember working
22 Hurricane Hugo; we had 300,000 customers out, and
23 it took us 18 days to restore power after it. Now,
24 of course, with Matthew in '16, we have a heck of a
25 lot more customers than we did back when Hugo came

1 through in '89.

2 Irma: 155,000 customers, back in four days.
3 That's where your tree trimming really pays off.

4 And then, of course, Hurricane Michael: 72,000
5 customers, and we got them back on within a day.

6 [Reference: Presentation Slide 9]

7 Here's an example of Winter Storm Pax. This
8 is Boundary Lane, in Aiken, and you see the oaks
9 that lined Boundary Lane. And believe it or not,
10 there's a powerline that runs through there, and
11 cut to the right specifications.

12 There's that same street, Boundary Lane, after
13 Winter Storm Pax came through there, in Aiken.

14 [Reference: Presentation Slide 10]

15 In addition to that, it's important to
16 understand that after the power is out, anything
17 over 10,000 customers, I'm communicating with the
18 Office of Regulatory Staff Executive Director, who
19 has a direct feed to the customer. Governor Haley
20 did a tremendous job of supporting us through these
21 storms, but she had one requirement for us, and
22 that was, "Let us know, by county, when you expect
23 to have 95 percent of the customers who can take
24 power" – meaning those who don't have structural
25 damage to their homes – "when 95 percent of them

1 are back on.”

2 So the biggest focus becomes, then, getting
3 the lights back on. People don't talk too much
4 about tree trimming at that time, other than, “Get
5 my power back on.” And at that time, once you hit
6 about the 48th hour of being in the dark. You
7 don't have any complaints about trimming trees at
8 that particular time.

9 But this was in Aiken. We had a press
10 conference there, as well as in Walterboro. And
11 there were probably 115 people, 120 people, that
12 were in the audience there. You see some various
13 political individuals there, as well. And the big
14 question they ask is, “Why is my power out? And
15 when is it coming back on?” And the greatest groan
16 that came out of that group, when I had to honestly
17 tell them, is, “I believe the last person's lights
18 will be back on at the end of the week,” which is
19 about five to six days.

20 It's important – people say, well – and
21 there've been various articles. There was one
22 article written that was in the local paper and
23 said, “SCE&G Takes a Chainsaw to Its Already Ragged
24 Reputation.” Immediately, that was picked up by
25 someone on social media, who tagged to that article

1 and said, "I believe we ought to take into
2 consideration our Second Amendment rights as we
3 protect our property and our trees." And that's
4 when it gets dangerous. And that's when it gets
5 dangerous for the personnel that are out there
6 trying to perform these duties. It's also
7 dangerous for the customers that come around and
8 gather around the trucks while they're trying to
9 complete their work. It's not a good situation
10 whatsoever.

11 [Reference: Presentation Slide 11]

12 But I did want to point out our general terms
13 and conditions, and I think some people miss this
14 as far as us providing them electrical or gas
15 service.

16 And it reads as follows: "The Customer, in
17 requesting or accepting service, thereby grants the
18 Company, without charge, necessary rights-of-way
19 and trimming and clearing privileges for its
20 facilities along, across, and under property
21 controlled by the Customer, to the extent that such
22 rights-of-way and trimming and clearing privileges
23 for its facilities along, across, and under
24 property controlled by the Customer are required,
25 necessary, or convenient to enable Company to

1 supply service to the Customer, and the Customer
2 also grants the Company the right to continue to
3 extend the Company's facilities on, across, or
4 under property controlled by the Customer, with
5 necessary trimming and clearing rights to serve
6 other Customers."

7 [Reference: Presentation Slide 12]

8 You know, it's really about public safety.
9 That's our number-one priority, and that's what
10 we're about. With the 26,000 miles of lines and
11 services that we have throughout our service
12 territory, it's about public safety.

13 You know, the biggest thing when you have a
14 storm, you see everybody say, "Don't go near downed
15 powerlines." That's what we talk about. Well, one
16 of the biggest risks that you have is people
17 digging around energized cable under the ground, or
18 people climbing up in trees. And we've had
19 situations where folks are climbing up in trees,
20 and they say, "Well, don't cut the tree; leave the
21 tree there." But it's a matter of public safety.

22 July of 1995, we had two children that climbed
23 a magnolia tree on James Island. They weighted the
24 limb down, it made contact with a primary
25 conductor. One lost an arm and had permanent leg

1 injury. The other one had severe burns and
2 scarring. The second one also suffered severe
3 burns and scarring, as well as psychological
4 trauma.

5 In Charleston, again, in August of 2003, two
6 children playing up in a tree, a third was down on
7 the ground. They made contact with an energized
8 line while up in the tree and weighing down the
9 limb. They both had burns and scarring, and one
10 had permanent injuries to his feet, where there was
11 an exit wound, from that standpoint. The one that
12 was down at the tree suffered – at the bottom of
13 the tree, that witnessed it all, a little girl
14 there, witnessed post-traumatic stress disorder.

15 It is about public safety, when we talk about
16 why we go and do it. It's also about employee
17 safety, which is very important.

18 [Reference: Presentation Slide 13]

19 November 16, 2006, I remember that date better
20 than I do my birthday. I got a call at 4:30 that
21 morning. A journeyman lineman was working out of
22 Barnwell, and he was working between – he was
23 working a storm between Denmark and Bamberg. He
24 went up in the bucket, and when he went up in the
25 bucket, there was a transformer pole there that had

1 a transformer on it that was shrouded in
2 vegetation. He reached out to clear the vegetation
3 and didn't realize that the stinger wire on the
4 transformer – which is the smaller wire that comes
5 off the hot primary and comes down into the
6 transformer; it's called a stinger wire, and you
7 can see them if you look up there. But he got on
8 it at the same time that his other hand was on the
9 pole ground, meaning that copper wire that is
10 stapled to the pole all the way to the ground and
11 wrapped around the butt down four feet in the
12 ground.

13 Electricity went through two pinholes in his
14 hand, like a snake bite. Electricity coursed
15 through his body, hemorrhaged his aorta and blew
16 out his left arm from his elbow past his
17 fingertips.

18 I had to go to the Bamberg Hospital and meet
19 his grandmother and his mother, and let them both
20 know that he was inside but he had passed away,
21 because he was dead before they got to the hand
22 controls and brought him down in the bucket. In
23 addition to that, I then had to go to Sawdust Lane,
24 and I had to sit down with his wife and two young
25 boys, and let them know that their father and

1 husband was not coming home.

2 Four days later, right before Thanksgiving, I
3 had the responsibility of eulogizing him in front
4 of some 300 people at Voorhees gymnasium, and
5 catered the repast for that community. And it
6 struck me just how much this community recognizes
7 and depends on these linemen who live in these
8 communities, who they know is going to go out and
9 answer the call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
10 Sometimes the customers call and it doesn't even go
11 through distribution dispatch. They have such a
12 great relationship with them, they'll call them and
13 let them know the power is out.

14 So, people ask, "Why do you cut trees?"
15 That's why I cut trees, because I think about that
16 employee every single morning when I pray to the
17 Lord to please keep my employees safe, who work the
18 sixth most dangerous job in the world. Because
19 guess what, I'm responsible. I'm responsible for
20 him being in that situation. I'm responsible for
21 him not being here any longer. And it's the
22 toughest thing I've ever had to deal with in my
23 life, and not a day goes by that I don't think
24 about that when it comes to how we maintain and
25 operate this system in order to serve others.

[Reference: Presentation Slide 14]

Now, that's the reason why I've got Mr. Mark Branham here. He's boots-on-the-ground. He's mad at me for having to wear a coat and tie, because he's usually out there in the trenches every day, every single day.

A lot of times, people knock my foresters and say, "Well, they don't have qualifications. They need to be second-guessed by a certified arborist." I'll use Mr. Branham as an example. He has a degree from Clemson University in Forest Research/Resource Management. Clemson – we hire a lot of engineers from Clemson, and they do an outstanding job of preparing their graduates in engineering to be able to pass the PE exam and get professional engineers on our system. They prepare them for that during their four-year degree. Clemson does an equally great job of preparing foresters so that they, too, can be certified arborists, because with the foresters we're hiring now, it's not just important that they understand how to be good foresters, but they have that arborist qualification as well, so they can work in these urban areas and preserve the health of the tree.

1 In addition to that, he's registered through
2 South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and
3 Regulation, through the Board of Registration for
4 Foresters, and he also has his Commercial Certified
5 Pesticide Applicator License, as well.

6 They call him a forester; I call him my
7 number-one guy for public safety and employee
8 safety.

9 With that, I'm going to turn it over to Mr.
10 Branham.

11 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** All right. Thank
12 you, Keller, for the introduction. And
13 Commissioners, I really thank you for the
14 opportunity to be here today to speak to you.

15 A little background on myself: I graduated in
16 2009 from Clemson University, and I actually
17 started out as a co-op student while attending
18 Clemson and I've been with SCE&G ever since.

19 So, again, thank you. I'm gonna go ahead and
20 get started, and we'll talk about our distribution
21 line clearing specifications.

22 [Reference: Presentation Slide 15]

23 So we have to have a minimum of 10 feet of
24 clearance to the side of our outermost primary
25 conductor. And when I talk about conductors, I

1 mean the top wires. So you have – it could be a
2 single-phase, a two-phase, or a three-phase. So
3 those are your primary conductors. Then the line
4 below that is the neutral.

5 So we have to have a minimum of 20 feet of
6 clearance above our highest primary conductor and
7 we have to have a minimum of 10 feet of clearance
8 below our bottom primary conductor.

9 We also trim out service lines, and typically
10 we only trim services for abrasion, and that would
11 include anything that is rubbing really hard on the
12 service.

13 One important thing to note is certain
14 conditions will exist that preclude those
15 clearances we just talked about – significant-size
16 parent limbs and leaders, and large trunks that
17 could be located less than 10 feet from the
18 outermost primary conductor – so in those
19 situations, we are okay to leave those.

20 Next slide.

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** [Indicating.]

22 [Reference: Presentation Slide 16.]

23 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** This next slide is
24 a figure that was taken out of the ISA Utility
25 Pruning BMP Manual, and it does a good job

1 illustrating why we have minimum clearances versus
2 stating a maximum clearance.

3 So if you look in the picture, again, the top
4 three wires are your primary conductors, and you'll
5 see a measurement where you've got 10 feet to the
6 side of that primary. So this, as an example, if I
7 were to make a cut right at 10 feet, what you would
8 be left with is a big stub on that tree. And what
9 a stub can do is it's a pathway for insects,
10 disease, rot and decay, to enter the tree, and it's
11 just a really bad situation for the trees. And if
12 we did that, I mean, we'd have a bunch of unhealthy
13 trees out there, so that's definitely not what we
14 want. But the figure actually reads, it states to
15 remove whole branches when practical; and when
16 clearance distances are specified – in this case,
17 10 feet – the cut should be made at the next
18 suitable lateral or parent limb beyond the stated
19 distance.

20 Next slide.

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** [Indicating.]

22 [Reference: Presentation Slide 17]

23 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** This next slide, I
24 just – I wanted to put this in here to highlight
25 all of the community engagement we do down in

1 Charleston, and other places, but this just focuses
2 on Charleston.

3 And I'm from Charleston; I've lived there my
4 whole entire life, and I really know how passionate
5 people are about trees, including myself. So we
6 really want to reach out to the public. We want to
7 educate the residents, the customers, as well as
8 our municipal staffs.

9 So just to highlight a few of these, in 2017,
10 we held a Riverland Terrace community workshop to
11 discuss needed upgrades to our primary distribution
12 system, and we also talked about tree trimming in
13 this meeting. And we – it was a really good
14 attendance. We had between 80 and 100 folks attend
15 this meeting.

16 We then met with the City of Charleston in
17 2018 to review our trimming plans.

18 We get down to 2018, we held a public workshop
19 at Charles Towne Landing to review our 2018
20 trimming plans.

21 We then met with the James Island PSD to
22 review the 2019 trimming plans. We also met with
23 the Town of James Island, Charleston County, and
24 the City of Charleston in December, to review 2019
25 trimming plans.

1 Then we'll move into 2019, and we held a
2 public tree-trimming demonstration on January 14,
3 2019. It was within the City of Charleston. It
4 was well attended by residents, as well as
5 municipal staff. We had the City of Charleston
6 arborist there, as well as Charleston County
7 arborist. And that was also well attended.

8 We then held a public workshop at the Town of
9 James Island municipal building on February 7th,
10 and we reviewed our 2019 trimming plans with
11 residents, to discuss proper pruning techniques and
12 educate customers regarding safety around overhead
13 powerlines.

14 One thing to note is that the tree-trimming
15 demo, we always start off by talking about safety,
16 and the first topic we talk about is safety in the
17 work zone. And what our contractors do is they set
18 out cones, as far as a work zone and an area that
19 people cannot enter. So that's the first thing we
20 do, and then we'll talk about proper pruning
21 techniques and then we'll actually have the
22 contractor to prune the tree. So it's a good time
23 for residents and municipal staff to see what the
24 tree looks like before, and then what the tree
25 looks like after pruning.

1 Next slide.

2 MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: [Indicating.]

3 [Reference: Presentation Slide 18]

4 MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: All right. This is
5 another figure that was taken out of the ISA
6 Utility Best Management Practices Handbook. This
7 slide, it really does a good job of showing our
8 most common examples of what trees look like after
9 they're directionally pruned.

10 Essentially, what we talk about when we say
11 "directional pruning" is we want to train the tree
12 to grow away from the powerline. So, essentially,
13 you're removing vegetation growing toward the
14 primary conductors and you're leaving the limbs
15 growing away, so that's why you end up with these
16 V-shaped trees and L-shaped trees.

17 We get a lot of feedback when customers see
18 V- and L-shaped trees. They say, "This tree is
19 butchered," but, you know, the tree is not
20 butchered; that's actually a national-standard way
21 to prune a tree for utility lines. So directional
22 pruning is the best option for utility pruning, and
23 the best option for a healthy tree.

24 Next slide.

25 MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: [Indicating.]

[Reference: Presentation Slide 19]

MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: All right. The next few slides, just – I really – I wanted to put these in there to show our consistency from cycle to cycle with our trimming.

The first picture on the left is a Google Street View of a tree on Savannah Highway. So this tree was actually trimmed in 2013, and the Google Street View is of the same tree two years later. And then, if you go over to the picture on the right, this tree was actually trimmed in 2018, so this is a present-day picture.

Now, if you look at the structure of the trees, they're very similar from cycle to cycle, and you really can't tell a difference in the trimming. So I thought that was just a good example of consistency with our trimming from cycle to cycle.

[Reference: Presentation Slide 20]

We have the same situation here. This is Frampton Avenue in Riverland Terrace. This particular tree, the one on the left, that's a Google Street View in 2015. The tree was actually trimmed in 2014.

And then, if you look at the picture on the

1 right, I took that picture a week ago after the
2 trimming that just occurred. So, again, you see –
3 that's a live oak tree with very similar structure,
4 really no apparent changes in trimming

5 [Reference: Presentation Slide 21]

6 And, again, this is the same situation in
7 Riverland Terrace on Wappoo Hall Drive. It's a big
8 live oak that's been directionally pruned to take
9 on that V shape. So the Google Street View is in
10 '15. That tree was trimmed in '14. And then the
11 picture on the right is our present trimming, and I
12 actually took that picture last week, as well.

13 One thing I did want to point out is there is
14 a structural leader on that tree that's probably
15 eight feet from our primary line, and that would
16 just be a good example of a situation like a large
17 parent limb or leader where we don't always get our
18 full stated 10 feet to the side of our primary.

19 [Reference: Presentation Slide 22]

20 All right. And this slide, it just – it
21 really shows why we do what we do. You know, we
22 really want to be proactive and maintain our five-
23 year cycle, and we really want to just trim these
24 trees before they pose a risk like this.

25 This is a very dangerous situation of a large

1 limb burdening a primary, not only for outages but
2 for safety. So that just illustrates why we do
3 what we do.

4 [Reference: Presentation Slide 23]

5 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Next, I'm gonna
6 show you a video. We thought – this allowable ex
7 parte briefing is to look at options. We talked a
8 little about why we trim and how we trim, but now
9 we want to look at options where we've had success
10 in dealing in neighborhoods.

11 Now if you're in the City, you've got a
12 franchise, and we can work underneath that
13 franchise on a Non-Standard Service Fund, and we've
14 been very successful on that. In the last five
15 years, we've spent close to \$20 million on projects
16 within our cities. So it's not like we're not
17 undergrounding and converting our system, but we
18 work hand-in-hand as a team with the cities
19 underneath that franchise in order to accomplish
20 that. And it'll explain in the video some how it
21 works from a mechanics standpoint, as well as a
22 financial standpoint.

23 We've got some challenges, as well, because if
24 you don't have a franchise in the city and you're
25 in the county, then you're gonna have to work that

1 out. But I'm confident we can work that out, as
2 well.

3 So this video is fairly self-explanatory, but
4 if y'all will indulge me, please.

5 [WHEREUPON, a video was shown, the audio
6 portion of which is transcribed
7 hereafter:

8 NARRATOR: This is Mathis Ferry
9 Road, in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.
10 It's a historic and scenic passageway
11 lined with beautiful, grand live oak
12 trees dripping with Spanish moss.

13 It's also a roadway filled with
14 overhead distribution powerlines running
15 through those large oaks.

16 In order to maintain reliable power
17 to residents that live on Mathis Ferry
18 Road, SCE&G performs necessary pruning
19 and trimming of those trees on a four-to-
20 five-year cycle.

21 Concerned residents wanted to find
22 solutions that would put an end to the
23 tree trimming and preserve the aesthetics
24 of their community.

25 CYNTHIA ROSENGREN [Resident]:

1 Mathis Ferry Road is a gem. And it's a
2 scenic highway, was designated a scenic
3 highway. And for the neighborhoods that
4 live along here, it's definitely
5 something to be proud of.

6 It's a shady straightaway, and it
7 provides a pleasant biking/walking path
8 that everyone really appreciates. And so
9 it was important, when it came time to
10 deal with tree issues, that we find some
11 solution that was going to meet the needs
12 of the neighborhoods.

13 ERIC DeMOURA [Mount Pleasant Town
14 Administrator]: You can imagine when the
15 necessary pruning had to begin, how many
16 individuals were very concerned,
17 contacted their local elected
18 representatives, contacted people they
19 knew within the government at Town Hall.
20 And that really prompted us to go ahead
21 and find a solution.

22 NARRATOR: Trying to find a
23 permanent solution to this issue led to
24 lengthy discussions between the Town of
25 Mount Pleasant, SCE&G, and the

1 surrounding communities along Mathis
2 Ferry Road. How could SCE&G continue to
3 provide reliable service to its
4 customers, while balancing aesthetics and
5 quality of life the municipality and the
6 community strive for?

7 The answer? Placing the overhead
8 distribution powerlines underground by
9 utilizing a special fund.

10 JOHN BURN [Mount Pleasant Town
11 Council Member]: We were getting a large
12 number of e-mail complaints and phone
13 complaints about the tree trimming in and
14 around that area. Primarily, what really
15 stirs the most problem with our residents
16 are the trimming of the, what we call,
17 grand oaks. I mentioned, how do we fix
18 this problem? I mean, instead of having
19 to revisit this issue every four or five
20 years, can't we come up with a real
21 solution?

22 NARRATOR: Most cities or towns that
23 SCE&G serves have a fund available for
24 burying those lines; it's called a Non-
25 Standard Service Fund.

1 The fund works as follows: A
2 municipality designates a percentage of
3 the franchise fee paid to them by SCE&G.
4 SCE&G then matches that amount, dollar
5 for dollar, and the fund builds. It's
6 then up to the city to prioritize what
7 projects it wants to undertake and
8 utilize those funds.

9 Customers may also incur part of the
10 costs associated with the project,
11 including a portion of the main
12 undergrounding, the cost of an
13 underground service line, new
14 streetlights, and a conversion cost,
15 depending on the project.

16 DANNY KASSIS [VP, SCE&G Customer
17 Relations and Renewables]: The concept,
18 actually, was developed in 1996 and
19 started with the City of Charleston
20 franchise agreement. They essentially
21 identified the same issue, and then as we
22 went through and did franchise agreement
23 renewals with the municipalities that we
24 serve in South Carolina, we perfected the
25 language in a way that I think worked

1 well for the both parties, the
2 municipalities as well as SCE&G, and it
3 was done in a way that offered an option
4 for folks that wanted to do projects
5 where they took over and replaced it with
6 underground.

7 NARRATOR: The Non-Standard Service
8 Fund is not an unlimited resource.
9 Municipalities have to select when and
10 how they use it to benefit their
11 community. Mount Pleasant has identified
12 major transportation corridors and has
13 already utilized the fund.

14 Coleman Boulevard is a good example.
15 Overhead lines on a portion of that route
16 are now nonexistent, through the use of
17 the Non-Standard Service Fund.

18 Some areas on Highway 17 have
19 benefited from the same methodology, and
20 the community notices.

21 Going from overhead powerlines to
22 underground lines can be a lengthy
23 process, and there are many factors to
24 consider if it can, in fact, be done, and
25 at what cost. Once all factors are

1 analyzed and agreed upon, the actual
2 conversion can begin.

3 Underground construction for the
4 lines, switchgear and pad-mounted
5 equipment installation takes place.
6 Equipment that will ultimately replace
7 the overhead lines will be placed along
8 the area, as well. Once the underground
9 system is energized and the switch is
10 made, the poles and the overhead lines
11 are removed.

12 CYNTHIA ROSENGREN [Resident]:
13 Knowing that there's funding in place to
14 do this kind of thing, to protect these
15 kinds of beautiful scenic highways in
16 South Carolina and the lowcountry in
17 general, it's an opportunity there to be
18 taken and to be taken advantage of, for
19 the betterment of the community long
20 term.

21 DANNY KASSIS [VP, SCE&G Customer
22 Relations and Renewables]: One of the
23 beauties of the Non-Standard Service Fund
24 methodology is that the burden doesn't
25 rest just with the company and ultimately

1 back to the ratepayers; it's a situation
2 where the town takes part of what they
3 already receive from the company in a
4 franchise fee, and utilize that to offset
5 some of the costs. So when it ends up,
6 you have a shared project.

7 ERIC DeMOURA [Mount Pleasant Town
8 Administrator]: I think we'll continue
9 to utilize the nonstandard portion of our
10 service agreement. We've used it very
11 successfully over time, and we continue
12 to plan on doing so. And with SCE&G as a
13 partner, I see it continuing for a long
14 time.

15 JOHN BURN [Mount Pleasant Town
16 Council Member]: It's obviously going to
17 be wonderful for us, and I fully intend
18 that we will continue this process when
19 and where we can, and I would just say
20 that: Why wouldn't you? It's a wonderful
21 opportunity to do something great for
22 your community, and it's available, and,
23 you know, it's – what a wonderful
24 partnership between SCE&G and the Town of
25 Mount Pleasant.]

[Reference: Presentation Slide 24]

MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: So that video kind of gives you an understanding of how we have utilized the Non-Standard Service Fund within our franchises, in order to work, but it takes a team concept. This is Boundary Street, not to be confused with Boundary Lane in Aiken, but in South Carolina we have a lot of Boundary Streets. But it just shows you the removal of overhead lines there. And that picture is rather symbolic of everybody that has to come together in order to make it work. SCE&G can't do it alone, the city can't do it alone, the county can't do it alone, and the homeowners can't do it alone. But if everybody comes together and sets aside their differences, we can find safe and reliable solutions to deal with some of the matters that we do have at play here.

But it goes without saying that, as long as you have trees and as long as you have powerlines, inevitably, there's going to be the need to maintain that system on an ongoing basis, and conflicts are going to arise. But I think the gentleman said it best in that video: How can we explain and how can we get people to understand and buy in, so we don't have this fight every five

1 years that we go around to do our circuit trimming?

2 That concludes the report that Mr. Branham and
3 I have for the Commission. I sincerely appreciate
4 your time and your attention, and we both are
5 available to ask any questions at the discretion of
6 the Commission. Thank you.

7 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thanks, Mr. Kissam and Mr.
8 Branham, for that report.

9 Commissioners, questions? Let's see,
10 Commissioner Hamilton.

11 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 Your presentation was excellent, and I feel
14 it's something you can be proud of. Let me ask you
15 one. One question is the loop between the two of
16 you sitting here today, and the contractor on the
17 ground. Do they have the understanding that you
18 presented to this Commission today as what they
19 should be doing and how they should be conducting?

20 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, sir, they
21 absolutely do. They have specs in our contract
22 that they have to follow, and all those stated
23 clearances that we talked about are in our
24 contract.

25 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Do y'all have a person

1 on-line to check and make sure they're following
2 proper procedures?

3 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, sir. Part of
4 the forester's job is to do field inspections and
5 final inspections. So, as the work is going on,
6 myself and another forester, we routinely look at
7 the work out in the field while it's being
8 performed. And, actually, when they finish a
9 project, we do a final inspection to make sure
10 everything is compliant.

11 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Thank you, very much.
12 That's –

13 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** And I will add,
14 Commissioner Hamilton, that is like a punch – we
15 call it a punch list, when they finish up. So
16 there's a punch list, and there are numerous times
17 that we have those contractors come back if there's
18 anything that they missed or didn't cut to a spec.
19 So it's during the course of that trimming work,
20 but it's also a punch list where these foresters
21 review the entire circuit, typically with the
22 supervision of that crew, and then to so direct the
23 activities to make sure it's in accordance with our
24 specifications contained within the contract.

25 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** The homeowners that

1 want underground service, you've got a program that
2 their percentage of the cost would be approximately
3 what percentage?

4 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** It varies,
5 Commissioner Hamilton, from project to project. It
6 all depends. For example, in some of the areas of
7 Riverland Terrace down in Charleston, you have a
8 single-phase line. If you looked in the video, you
9 see some pretty robust three-phase lines. So,
10 likewise, when you start undergrounding it, that
11 cost can vary, based upon the infrastructure that
12 you're placing into service.

13 The biggest challenge is getting everybody on
14 the same page. One of the neighborhoods in
15 Charleston we did was The Crescent. It took 20
16 years. People would sell houses back and forth,
17 and they are obligated in order to – you've got to
18 pay to convert your meter can. Remember, if you
19 get overhead service, it's going to come into the
20 stob sticking up there, to the service coming
21 there, to the weatherhead – they call it. Well,
22 when you go to underground, you're going to have to
23 pay an electrician to change out your meter can, so
24 that you have a 90-degree elbow, you know, coming
25 up underneath that meter can to bring that

1 underground service.

2 The video referenced streetlights. That's
3 another thing that has to be done.

4 And then the most difficult thing of all is
5 the placement of switchgear and pad-mounted
6 transformers. You saw the switchgear when they
7 were – in the video, the picture of it, and the
8 pad-mounted transformers, because nobody wants it
9 in their yard, but they're completely fine for you
10 to put it in their neighbor's yard. And so what
11 happens is you go from a single-phase line in a
12 tree canopy, as Mr. Branham demonstrated to you,
13 that's kind of out of sight, out of mind. It
14 becomes intrusive when we go and trim these trees.
15 And then, of course, it becomes apparent to
16 everyone in the neighborhood.

17 Well, when you make that step, and everybody
18 decides, "Well, I want to go underground," then
19 sometimes it's like, well, be careful what you ask
20 for, because then you've still got to site those
21 underground structures in people's yards, and they
22 become more in contact with them when they're
23 parking their cars, when they're driving, when
24 they're running their lawn mowers, weed eating.
25 Don't plant anything in front of them within 12

1 feet, because you gotta get in there with a shotgun
2 stick to grab those elbows and pull them out, when
3 you're switching load around. So there are
4 requirements that come with the underground, and it
5 can be intrusive as well. But it just takes
6 everybody working together, and we've got a long
7 track record of working with municipalities and
8 customers.

9 Now, you may be talking about an individual
10 customer that says, "I want a hybrid service run to
11 my house." In other words, I've got back-lot
12 overhead and I want to run underground into my
13 home. Well, that's an expense to be borne by the
14 homeowner there.

15 So we're talking here about neighborhoods,
16 streets, and things of that nature that is
17 typically taken on by the county. But at the same
18 time, we have individual homeowners that may want
19 it underground at their home for one reason or
20 another.

21 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Well, thank you both
22 for your presentation. And, Keller, it's good to
23 see you.

24 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** It's great to
25 see you, Commissioner. Thank you.

1 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Thank you.

2 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you.

3 Commissioner Howard.

4 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I do appreciate your
5 presentation. I learned a lot. But we still have
6 a problem. And will you tell me what your
7 situation is, now, with the City of Charleston, as
8 far as the moratorium of – where are you with the
9 City of Charleston?

10 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Where we are
11 with the City of Charleston, underneath the
12 franchise, they asked us to pause tree trimming,
13 and we did. And I'll tell you I'm not in favor of
14 that, because we're getting to the end of a five-
15 year cycle, and we're getting into storm season.
16 And we would have had it trimmed out prior to storm
17 season coming in. But it's coming, and you've got
18 a five-year cycle there where you've got these
19 branches that are in close proximity to these
20 electric lines. But, we did pause, and we're
21 currently working with them on an agreement. We
22 used to have an agreement a long time ago; that
23 agreement has since expired. It didn't have an
24 evergreen on it; it had a term on it. And we're
25 working right now – Danny Kassis, who was in that

1 video as well, is working with the City of
2 Charleston to come up with an agreement so we can
3 begin trimming again.

4 In certain areas, the City has notified us by
5 various means – and I'm not familiar with exactly
6 how they're going about doing it. The City of
7 Charleston, the way they handle their franchise is
8 they have a list of projects, okay, that they had,
9 and they take them as they come, and they work
10 through the franchise, just as it was described in
11 the video for the Non-Standard Service Fund. And
12 they take them as they come.

13 The City of Columbia, likewise, they've done a
14 lot at Five Points, North Main, the Vista. They
15 spend their money in various ways, such as that.
16 You saw Boundary Street there in Beaufort.

17 So, the City of Charleston asked us to pause,
18 and we paused. And we are working on that
19 agreement at this time. In addition to that, we're
20 working with Charleston County, because some of
21 these neighborhoods, particularly in Riverland
22 Terrace, I mean, a circuit doesn't know where the
23 county and city lines are, so you've got some
24 incorporated in with the county, as well. And
25 Danny Kassis has been working with the county, as

1 well, to come up with an agreement. In fact, I
2 think he e-mailed it to me today. And so he's
3 working on an agreement in that regard, as well.

4 So if we believe that the County and the City
5 is willing to work with us on a funding for
6 underground, and they can get the property owners
7 within there to agree to conversion of their meter
8 can, location of switchgear and pad-mounted
9 transformers, then we are willing to relax our
10 specifications in those areas in order to be able
11 to work it out. And so that means we won't trim to
12 the clearances Mr. Branham described for you.

13 But understand this, if we're unable to work
14 it out, we will go back in towards the end of the
15 year and we will cut to the full specifications Mr.
16 Branham described.

17 That's where we stand with the City of
18 Charleston, that's where we stand with Charleston
19 County, in that particular – in those particular
20 areas.

21 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Does your agreement with
22 Charleston County have a pause in it?

23 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** It does not
24 have a pause in it.

25 But we do have a franchise, and we pay – we

1 collect franchise fees and we pay franchise fees.
2 And just as we can go in and take out franchise –
3 you know, take out money for Non-Standard Service
4 Fund, then, if they cause us, from a mobilization
5 standpoint – because we're scrambling right now to
6 keep these crews busy, and the problem is, with
7 these crews, if they aren't working, they're going
8 to work somewhere else. They're going to find
9 work. And it may be out of the State. And in the
10 event that they go out of the State, then we won't
11 be able to get them back.

12 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I think Commissioner
13 Belser wants to –

14 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** I'm sorry to interrupt,
15 but he asked about Charleston County. Do you have
16 a franchise agreement with Charleston County?

17 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** No, ma'am. The
18 City of Charleston.

19 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Okay. He asked about
20 Charleston County. That's why I'm confused.

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, ma'am.
22 I'm sorry. We do not have a franchise – I
23 appreciate that, Commissioner Belser. Thank you.
24 We do not have a franchise with Charleston County.
25 We do pay taxes into – you know, property taxes

1 into Charleston County. That's our relationship
2 with them.

3 But, no, sir, we do not have a franchise
4 agreement.

5 The agreement that I was talking about,
6 Commissioner Belser, has to do with an agreement
7 Mr. Kassis is working on as it relates to our tree
8 trimming and the potential for doing an engineering
9 and design study on undergrounding of our
10 facilities there. Thank you.

11 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I guess my mindset is,
12 is there any variance that can be offered because
13 an area has a historical or scenic highway
14 designation? I mean, can you lessen the cuts –
15 like you mentioned you might be able to do, that
16 you had some discretion on – is the discretion
17 yours? Is the discretion FERC or NERC? Who sets
18 these standards?

19 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yeah, so we do take
20 into consideration, like we talked about, those
21 large parent limbs and leaders, and on these big,
22 large live oaks that everybody sees in Charleston,
23 you know, that is what we take into consideration.
24 But we are following the American National
25 Standards Institute, ANSI A300 standards, and we

1 also comply with the ISA Utility Pruning Best
2 Management Practices.

3 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I would call it a hot
4 issue. I – you know, just any designation you
5 want, we're talking about historical, we're talking
6 about scenic highway, we're talking about that.
7 Out of the 26,000 – 26,000, what, miles of
8 distribution line, you said, Mr. Kissam?

9 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, sir, and
10 services.

11 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** How many feet or miles
12 are we talking about in Charleston County and
13 Charleston, what I would call the hot-issue areas?
14 I mean, are we – are we talking 100 miles, are we
15 talking 50 miles, are we talking 10 miles?

16 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Well, it's so
17 spread out. I mean, it's in Mount Pleasant. I
18 mean, it's on James Island. It's on St. John's
19 Island. It's in Summerville. It's in Aiken.
20 It's in Columbia. So it's spread out, so it's
21 really hard to pin down exactly what the mileage
22 is. I'm sorry, I don't have that information.

23 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I guess from my
24 parochial interest, I'd be talking about Charleston
25 right now, just Riverland Terrace, Byrnes Down,

1 Avondale, those areas that are really pretty vocal
2 about it now. I guess my question is, number one,
3 is there anything you can do with a variance, maybe
4 cut less but cut more often? And I know you got a
5 budget question with that. But it seems like – it
6 seems like something could be done, and I
7 personally don't have the answer, but it's a
8 concern.

9 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Well, I think
10 something can be done. I think we demonstrated
11 that in the presentation, that we have put \$20
12 million worth of projects underground in the last
13 five years. And if someone wants to work with us,
14 then I think what you do is you start with one
15 street as a pilot, and see if you are successful.
16 But at the same time, I can't speak for the City
17 or, much less, the County on how they'd like to
18 allocate funds towards that.

19 When it comes to trimming the trees, we're
20 gonna cut it to the specification. There's too
21 much risk on the other end from a liability
22 standpoint and a risk standpoint and a safety
23 standpoint for both our employees and the public.

24 Now, Mr. Branham described in his cuts, when
25 we deal with those grand trees, you know, he may

1 get six feet of clearance, he may get eight feet of
2 clearance. So we already get it. And we've been
3 trimming those trees for a long time. He
4 demonstrated in his photos that – you know,
5 everybody says, "Well, you're cutting more than
6 you've ever cut in the past." The photos clearly
7 show that we are not, that he had up there.

8 And, you know, in addition to that, we gotta
9 be consistent with how we treat our customers, and
10 that – ever since I came over to the electric side,
11 that's what I do. So if somebody knows somebody or
12 somebody knows me or calls me up and things of that
13 nature, it's got to be consistent and it's got to
14 be fair to our customers, regardless of where they
15 live, regardless of how much money they have or
16 regardless of what influence they have. The safety
17 aspects of it are first and primary in my mind.

18 So we have a mechanism. Mr. Kassis is working
19 nonstop with the County, as well as the City, to
20 try to broker some arrangement where we can show
21 flexibility and we can show variance. But when it
22 comes to the trimming, we've got to cut it to a
23 consistent standard. If not, then the whole thing
24 blows up and we're not cutting to a standard
25 anywhere. What prevents somebody in the rural

1 community where I grew up, you know, in Calhoun
2 County, from saying, "Well, I want my tree cut like
3 you've cut them in Riverland Terrace." You know,
4 "Because you did it like that, cut it here." And I
5 don't have an answer for that.

6 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Well, my first answer
7 would be historical or scenic designation. I think
8 it's, you know, basically – even though it's a
9 historical or scenic designation or any other
10 designation, that doesn't have anything to do with
11 – and you're gonna say the safety's the same in
12 Calhoun County as in Riverland Terrace.

13 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** [Nodding head.]

14 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** But then again – I don't
15 know that that's a true statement.

16 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, sir, and I
17 respect that. Yes, sir.

18 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I'm saying –

19 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** I would say
20 that the trees themselves offer up what Mr. Branham
21 tried to describe was, where they have the large
22 leaders, which are what these grand trees have, we
23 don't cut them, and we already allow them to be at
24 a different specification as we would some other
25 trees.

1 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I guess what I want to
2 say is – and I'll say it – what do we have to do to
3 get the ball in motion? What do we have to do – I
4 see Mr. Kassis out there. What do we have to do,
5 to do what you're suggesting we do, meet with the
6 City, meet with the County – and Mr. Kassis,
7 probably, and you said he's already done that, but
8 I don't want it dropped. I mean, I think we need
9 to do it, and I guess my attitude is that of the
10 great modern American philosopher Larry the Cable
11 Guy: Let's just get it done.

12 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, sir. I
13 like Larry the Cable Guy, too. And I will tell
14 you, you're exactly right. And that's what it's
15 got to take. It's got to take an agreement, so
16 that we can engineer and design, and we'll put it
17 underground. We'll put it underground. But we've
18 got to have a funding mechanism. We've got one in
19 the franchise. As Commissioner Belser pointed out,
20 we don't have it with the County. But you've got
21 to allocate funds in order to work with us, in
22 order to get it done. And that's what we've got to
23 focus on to do. And we can get it done.

24 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Have you studied any
25 other funding method, besides that Non-Standard

1 Service Fund? I'm thinking about funds like
2 Streetscapes and, you know, beautification of
3 neighborhoods, and all that. If there are funds
4 available for that, would that be a possibility of
5 a source for going underground?

6 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** That would
7 certainly be up to the jurisdiction that is there,
8 the County or the City. And we'd be happy to work
9 with either one of them, and even the neighborhood
10 associations at times, in order to achieve this
11 objective.

12 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** One another – one other
13 question. We've had these town hall meetings. Do
14 you notify ORS, so they can have a representative
15 at the town hall meetings?

16 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, sir. We
17 actually had a representative from the ORS attend
18 our Town of Mount Pleasant tree-trimming workshop.

19 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Well, if you hadn't, I
20 was going to encourage you to have ORS at each
21 meeting.

22 And, again, thank you for your presentation.
23 And we'll follow up sometime soon and see how we're
24 doing.

25 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, sir.

1 Thank you.

2 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Commissioner Belser.

3 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
4 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

5 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Good afternoon.

6 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** I apologize for my voice
7 this afternoon and ask you to bear with me. I
8 noticed in the video that – I believe it was the
9 Mount Pleasant Councilman said we revisit this
10 every four to five years, and it seems like I'm
11 hearing about it every four to five years, whether
12 it's Columbia or Charleston or Aiken, so, anything
13 that we can do to get this thing resolved. But a
14 couple of questions I had: Looking at your slide
15 deck, I'm at the slide that talks about
16 distribution line clearing specifications. It's
17 right after Mr. Branham's qualifications, I
18 believe.

19 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** [Indicating.]

20 [Reference: Presentation Slide 15]

21 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** And it says a minimum of
22 a 10-foot clearance to the side from the outermost
23 primary conductor and a minimum of 20 clearance for
24 the highest primary conductor. Am I understanding
25 you that when there's a large leader, we're talking

1 about the large, perhaps, vertical limb going up on
2 a tree? Is that what you're referring to as a
3 large leader?

4 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** That's correct.

5 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Y'all are not cutting to
6 those specs; is that correct?

7 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** That's correct. It
8 would have to be significant in size, in order to
9 leave it.

10 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Okay. And how about,
11 how far down in the canopy are you going? Because
12 I'm new to the Commission, Mr. Branham, but the
13 electric lines are up on the top, right, and then a
14 lot of poles will have telephone and cable TV lines
15 below that. Are y'all cutting below those lines
16 that aren't your all's?

17 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Well, we have to
18 have a minimum of four feet below our neutral, so –

19 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Okay. Well, could we
20 look at one of your pictures? I'm looking at the
21 one from Savannah Highway.

22 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** [Indicating.]

23 [Reference: Presentation Slide 19]

24 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** That. And just because
25 it's easier for me to see, the picture on the

1 right, that really thick black line at the bottom,
2 that's cable TV, is it not?

3 MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: Yes, ma'am.

4 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Okay. So where is your
5 neutral that you have to cut four foot below?

6 MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: So on that
7 particular line, if you look up top, you'll see
8 three lines up top?

9 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Uh-huh?

10 MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: And then if you go
11 down to where the transformer's at –

12 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Right.

13 MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: – you'll see
14 another silver line? That's the neutral. So we
15 have to have a minimum of four feet below the
16 neutral, but as I was talking about, we say
17 "minimum" because in order to comply with ANSI
18 standard and not leave a stub, sometimes you have
19 to go beyond that to make a proper cut.

20 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Okay. And I think that
21 – I know when all this started, I was driving in
22 downtown Columbia and saw some crews out, and I was
23 just like, really? Because you just start looking
24 at some of these cuts – but, okay.

25 You mentioned, Mr. Kissam – you discussed that

1 in some areas undergrounding is not appropriate,
2 having saltwater intrusion and flooding. And when
3 that started, I was kind of like, are they saying
4 it can't be undergrounded in Charleston? But in
5 Mount Pleasant, they're in the same situation. So
6 it's all a matter of funding? Is that where we
7 are?

8 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** I really – I
9 mean, it can be engineering designed, it can be
10 constructed anywhere. I mean, it could be in the
11 coastal areas. A lot of the new development, you
12 know, is on the water, and most of that is
13 underground. New construction is underground.

14 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** New construction of the
15 subdivision? Or E&G's lines going into the
16 subdivision?

17 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Typically, it's
18 within the subdivision. You know, it depends on
19 how big that subdivision is. You've got Dunes West
20 and Parks West, where we have express feeders that
21 go to those subdivisions and then they dip
22 underground, and then they serve the various spaces
23 of that subdivision all underground. That's
24 typically how it works.

25 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** But that's what is being

1 built, initially, is it not?

2 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, ma'am.

3 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** It's a little more
4 difficult once the area is built up and you're
5 trying to convert.

6 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** That's correct.
7 I mean, you can go out there in a neighborhood with
8 these live oaks, and I can tell you, people look at
9 the canopy of a tree. The way you kill a tree, or
10 any plant, is to mess with the roots. And you can
11 go out there and start directionally boring, and
12 you'll stick a bore stem on the ground on one side
13 of those trees, and it just doesn't come out the
14 other side. So you've got to be very conscious and
15 careful about what you do.

16 When I was talking about the underground
17 facilities having saltwater intrusion from storm
18 surge, that was usually after storms. However, we
19 still build in those areas; where you have
20 subdivisions, we still put the facilities
21 underground.

22 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** On the "Charleston
23 Community Engagement" slide, I noticed in the 2017
24 activities with regard to the Riverland Terrace
25 workshop, it states, "to discuss needed upgrades to

1 the primary distribution system.” What upgrades
2 are we talking about?

3 [Reference: Presentation Slide 17]

4 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** That system is
5 an old 4 kV system. That’s the only way, with the
6 close proximity of the trees, it stays in. So when
7 it gets a contact, it’s at a lower voltage and it
8 usually doesn’t trip out as much. It’ll handle a
9 little bit of contact.

10 If we upgraded it to our normal distribution
11 system, that would be a 23 kV system, and that’s
12 what is the typical voltage on our distribution
13 system. It’s an antiquated system.

14 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Has that – have those
15 upgrades been done yet? That was two years ago.

16 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** No, ma’am.

17 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Is that something that
18 could be taken into account? Since you’re looking
19 at upgrades anyway, that that could be a sharing of
20 cost, perhaps, or something, going forward?

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** We’re willing
22 to work on anything that we can, to broker a
23 solution, and that certainly could be part of the
24 discussion.

25 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Is Riverland Terrace in

1 – is that James Island?

2 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, ma'am.

3 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** So, is that County? Or
4 is that City?

5 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** County and
6 City. That's why I kind of did the double-dance
7 with you and Commissioner Howard on that, because
8 these lines don't know the municipal limits, and so
9 some of it's County and some of it's City, which
10 makes this a unique situation in order to try to
11 resolve.

12 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Well, I reckon, from
13 what I'm hearing, it's probably easier for Mr.
14 Kassis dealing with the City, because of the
15 franchise agreement,

16 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** That is
17 correct.

18 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Is there someone on
19 County Council or in County government that is on
20 this issue and discussing it?

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, there is.

22 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** I kind of jotted a lot
23 of notes down here. I don't mean to jump around so
24 much, but it looks like I am, and I apologize. We
25 had a number of pictures. Are there any that are –

1 did you have any of what's going on in Riverland
2 Terrace or what's happening now?

3 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** In the pictures?

4 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Yes, sir.

5 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, ma'am. If we
6 look right there –

7 [Reference: Presentation Slide 20]

8 – that's actually a tree on Frampton Avenue,
9 right in the heart of Riverland Terrace.

10 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** So the picture on the
11 right is the current one; is that correct?

12 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** That's correct. I
13 took that picture last week, I believe.

14 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Are additional workshops
15 or additional public discussion opportunities
16 needed to at least let the residents know that
17 y'all are hearing them and trying to work through
18 something? I mean, it's just that, I mean, people
19 just see people cutting or see the linemen or the
20 crews out there, cutting, and nobody likes to see
21 that. So, I mean, are the workshops in close
22 enough proximity to alert the residents what's
23 coming into their area, or –

24 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, ma'am. We
25 give them plenty of advance notice for the

workshops.

COMMISSIONER BELSER: But – for the workshops. But once the workshops are done, do they know a timeline of when you might be coming into their neighborhood, so that they're not shocked all of a sudden to see the crews out there?

MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: Yes, ma'am. At the workshop, we have a large map, typically 34-by-44, showing the overhead electric lines. And when we're speaking with customers, we try to talk about the schedule. And one of the biggest questions we get asked is, "When will you be at my house?" And we do try to estimate that for them. But we also let them know that there is a 1-800 number. They can call in if they have any questions or concerns. It's a customer service number.

COMMISSIONER BELSER: Is there anything on the E&G website about alerts for tree trimming going on, that customers can log in and look and see what areas are coming up?

MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]: We have a Tree Trimming page that goes over our general trimming practices, but we don't typically have maps and estimates on that trimming page.

COMMISSIONER BELSER: I mean, you certainly

1 have qualifications and you have someone else, you
2 said, another forester on staff, but what about the
3 crews that are actually out there doing the
4 trimming? What are their qualifications, other
5 than Dave's Tree Service? Because these are all
6 contracted, are they not?

7 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Yes, ma'am.

8 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** So they're
9 qualified line-clearance arborists, and through
10 OSHA they have the training where they're legally
11 permitted to work within 10 feet of a powerline.
12 So they have in-house ongoing training to be able
13 to do that work.

14 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** For the safety aspect.

15 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** For the safety, and
16 they do in-house pruning.

17 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** In-house within their
18 company, or y'all – in-house in SCE&G?

19 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** I'd say both.

20 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Okay. Y'all go over
21 standards and –

22 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, ma'am. Before
23 we start a project, we generally – generally meet
24 with the general foreman and the tree foremans, and
25 we have discussions about our specs.

1 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** When you say a
2 “project,” is a project all of Charleston – City of
3 Charleston, or Charleston County? Or is a project
4 a neighborhood?

5 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** A project is
6 typically an area.

7 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** How big an area?

8 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** For example, the
9 James Island project, it’s right at 71 miles. And
10 Riverland Terrace is approximately seven or eight
11 of those miles.

12 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** And how long would you
13 estimate that project would take?

14 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** I think we’re
15 looking at the end of August, September, before we
16 finish that entire 71 miles.

17 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** So that gets me back to
18 how are customers notified that it’s coming to
19 their area? We’re in April. Started in February
20 or March. And it’s not going to be finished until
21 August. So really, people don’t have a good idea
22 of when they might see folks in their neighborhood,
23 do they?

24 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, ma’am, they
25 do, because what we do is break up the project into

1 sections, and tied to that section is a postcard
2 notification that SCE&G sends out, giving the
3 customer notice that tree crews will be in their
4 area soon.

5 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Perfect. How far in
6 advance does that go out?

7 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** It's a minimum of
8 two weeks, but sometimes we try to get them out
9 three or four weeks ahead of time.

10 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you. I appreciate
11 that.

12 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, ma'am.

13 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** I think that's about it,
14 right now. I appreciate y'all being here and
15 bringing this information to us. Thank you, very
16 much. Like Commissioner Howard, and I think the
17 other Commissioners, we sure hope that y'all will
18 continue working with the County and the City. I
19 just remember last time when it happened over in
20 Shandon – what was that? Five or six years ago?

21 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Six years ago.
22 I remember it well.

23 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Oh, my goodness – oh,
24 this was the other thing. You mentioned that the
25 City and the County both had arborists on their

1 staffs; is that correct?

2 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yes, sir.

3 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** How closely do y'all
4 work with them? Do they have to sign off on
5 anything, or do they get to look at your project to
6 see if they have any concerns that they can bring
7 to your attention, or anything?

8 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yeah, they're
9 welcome to go out and look at our work at any time
10 they want. And, typically, we do consult with them
11 on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

12 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** How about on the
13 planning stage, do they have input?

14 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** They don't have
15 input on our clearance specs or our specifications.

16 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** I understand that. But
17 just as far as rolling out your project and as the
18 project is ongoing. I know your specs are set by
19 ANSI and others. But are they involved, other than
20 just to say "Welcome to Charleston"?

21 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Yeah, they're
22 involved. And, like, this – for the trimming this
23 year, we met with all our municipalities at the end
24 of 2018 and, you know, we discussed where we would
25 be trimming. We provided them maps, and just kind

1 of talked about the schedule, you know, when
2 different projects would be worked. And they were
3 welcome to have input in those meetings.

4 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** Thank you, very much.

5 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** And I will add
6 to that, Commissioner Belser. In Columbia, Missy
7 Gentry, the Assistant City Manager, does an
8 outstanding job working with us. She has the
9 foresters, the arborists for the City that work
10 with her. And they're very good sometimes at
11 helping us resolve disputes. If a customer sits
12 there and they want to – they're going back and
13 forth, and we're going back and forth with them,
14 then they'll come in as a third party, and they'll
15 look and they'll verify, "Hey, this particular
16 tree, this particular cut, is appropriate," and
17 things of that nature. And so they really help us
18 resolve some individual disputes, as it relates to
19 trees, too. They're actively involved with what we
20 do.

21 **COMMISSIONER BELSER:** And that brings up a
22 question. Wasn't that an agreement that the City
23 of Columbia reached with y'all, with the last
24 dispute back six or seven years ago, over in
25 Shandon? Or is that something y'all would be

1 willing to offer to the City or the County?

2 MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: In Charleston?

3 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Yes.

4 MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: We'd be agreed
5 to do the identical thing we did in Columbia down
6 there.

7 COMMISSIONER BELSER: At least offer that to
8 them and tell them how – let the County and City
9 know that it seems to be working well in Columbia.
10 It might be something that they could work with
11 y'all on down there.

12 MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]: Yes, ma'am, we
13 will. Thank you, Commissioner Belser.

14 COMMISSIONER BELSER: Thank you.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 CHAIRMAN RANDALL: Thank you, ma'am.

17 Just one quick question. And I appreciate
18 both of y'all being here today. Mr. Kissam, you
19 were talking about, you know, missing the five-year
20 cycle and the storm season coming. Is there – are
21 there any financial type grants that are available,
22 you know, declaring it as a hurricane area or with
23 FEMA or any – does anybody ever – I don't – this is
24 I'm asking just for information, because I've never
25 heard of anything, but I didn't know if there was

1 something that could be that sort of designation,
2 being in an area that's going to have – that's had
3 hurricanes and going to have hurricanes. That's
4 always a –

5 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** No, sir. I'll
6 just have to say that the question on government
7 assistance always comes up after the storm passes
8 through.

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Sure.

10 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** And just like
11 Governor Haley, when I went with her, there were
12 three questions asked. Two of me: "Why is my power
13 out? When will my power be back on?" And then the
14 question of her is, "When are we going to get our
15 FEMA money?" And so it's always after the storm.

16 So I don't know of anything. You know, all I
17 can do is assure this Commission that we recognize
18 the sensitivity of the various neighborhoods we
19 serve. We try to be good stewards of those, and
20 that streetscape. We do take aesthetics into
21 consideration. You are always going to have – we
22 will never satisfy everybody. That is not an
23 expectation that I have when I get up in the
24 morning. We're going to try to maintain the safety
25 of the system as best we can. We're going to try

1 to be prudent allocators of the funds that we have
2 budgeted for tree trimming, to get the most out of
3 them. And then we're going to work with the
4 communities that we serve, just like anything else
5 we do, in order to receive input, be respectful of
6 the stakeholders, and try to balance the interests
7 that they have with the interests that we have of
8 operating a safe and reliable system.

9 You know, it was interesting. I watched some
10 of the meetings that y'all had on the merger with
11 Dominion, and one of the things that is a merger
12 requirement is to maintain the levels of
13 reliability that we have here on our system. Well,
14 a big part of that is tree trimming. It's safety
15 and it's reliability. So I know that I can't let
16 those 90s become 100s, and I sure can't let it go
17 back to 147 and 176, because our customers are used
18 to having a high level of reliability and also a
19 high level of safety.

20 And if you were to come to my office, the
21 thing I'm most proud of are four trophies outside
22 my office where our transmission and distribution
23 crews rated the highest safety performance for four
24 years, across the entire industry. Those awards
25 mean a lot, because they contrast what happened on

1 November 16, 2006. When you actually lose an
2 employee, then you're focused on safety. And this
3 is a big part of that [indicating]. And it's a
4 balance.

5 We're not going to make everybody happy. And
6 I apologize for that. I feel for those folks.
7 I've gotten calls directly from residents on James
8 Island. Heck, I'm kin to some of them. But, you
9 know, it's the same thing about we've got to trim
10 the trees. And I know that it's – just like the
11 situation in Shandon that Commissioner Belser
12 talked about, when you first go in there, it is a
13 shock. It's like somebody throwing cold water in
14 your face – ice water in your face. Then once
15 you're in there and you start working at it, and it
16 starts going, and, you know, we've had safety
17 situations where people are encouraged in the
18 neighborhood, "Park your vehicle under the work.
19 Park it under the tree where they can't get there
20 to work." Well, that doesn't solve anything.
21 We've had folks that say, "Well, film them while
22 they're working, because it slows them down and
23 they take more time and they're more careful." So,
24 we take all of those and we take all that in
25 stride. That's the business that we're in. That's

1 what we signed up for. And we're gonna treat
2 people with respect and we're gonna treat them with
3 courtesy. And if there are any funds out there,
4 Chairman Randall, that are available for us to do
5 anything along those lines, you know, we certainly
6 will try to do that as we go forward.

7 We're working in Beaufort County now on a
8 transmission line that has a scenic highway
9 associated with it. Mr. Kassis is in the middle of
10 that. He seems to be in the middle of all these
11 things. But he represents us well, and he will
12 seek to balance and broker a solution. He's got a
13 lot of experience with this, and that's what we're
14 gonna try to do.

15 So you've got my pledge that we're gonna try
16 to work this out in a reasonable, balanced fashion,
17 taking into consideration the uniqueness of the
18 communities we serve.

19 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you. I appreciate
20 y'all being here, and I appreciate the challenges,
21 having been a mayor in a city with an electric
22 system, so...

23 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** Mr. Chairman.

24 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Yes, sir.

25 **COMMISSIONER HOWARD:** I'd like to take this

1 opportunity to recognize Sen. Sandy Senn. She's in
2 the audience. She very active in this problem.
3 And, thank you for coming, Senator.

4 **SEN. SENN:** Thank you.

5 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you, ma'am.
6 Appreciate you being here.

7 Commissioners, anything else?

8 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** I've got – Mr.
9 Chairman.

10 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Yes, sir.

11 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** – just a short thing.

12 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Yes, sir, Commissioner
13 Hamilton.

14 **COMMISSIONER HAMILTON:** Sitting here through
15 this afternoon and realizing that the problem that
16 you encounter with tree trimming and this
17 organization, that one of our primary
18 responsibilities is reliability of investor-owned
19 companies that we oversee. So you're between a
20 rock and a hard place a lot of times. And it's not
21 limited to Charleston or Aiken or Beaufort. I'm
22 from Marlboro County, and I promise you they're
23 just the same way about the trees. And on
24 Charleston County Council, I believe any local
25 government, an elected official would be willing to

1 help work out any solution that he could to help
2 the problem, because I'm sure those voters are
3 calling him, or them, as much as anybody else.

4 I appreciate it. I appreciate the job you do.
5 Thank you.

6 **MR. KELLER KISSAM [Dominion]:** Thank you
7 Commissioner Hamilton.

8 **MR. MARK BRANHAM [SCE&G]:** Thank you.

9 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** Thank you. Any other –
10 anything else, Commissioners?

11 [No response]

12 Mr. Kissam, Mr. Branham, thank you for being
13 here.

14 Mr. Burgess, thank y'all for being here.

15 Ms. Edwards, thank you for being here.

16 And we thank everybody. Senator, we
17 appreciate you coming to our meeting today, as
18 well.

19 **SEN. SENN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

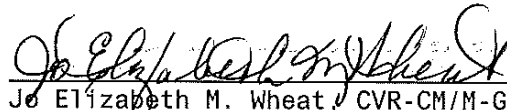
20 **CHAIRMAN RANDALL:** And we are adjourned.

21 [WHEREUPON, at 3:25 p.m., the proceedings
22 in the above-entitled matter were
23 adjourned.]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM-GNSC, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing is, to the best of my skill and ability, a true and correct transcript of all the proceedings had regarding a requested allowable ex parte briefing in the above-captioned matter before the PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, on this the 7th day of April, 2019.


Jo Elizabeth M. Wheat, CVR-CM/M-GNSC
Hearings Reporter, PSC/SC
My Commission Expires: January 27, 2021.